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Watermelons

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LESLIE CHANG

Watermelons

kept cold in the lake in net bags
tied to emerald pleasure boats
canopied and lit

by lanterns, on sweltering nights
my mother and her cousins
entertained themselves

playing cards, dancing and spitting
the tear-shaped seeds overboard.
Watermelons stored

under rosewood beds, Grandmother
still remembers the summer
retreat, its courtyards

planted with willows, wedding gifts
spied in the banquet hall, one
ripe melon cooling

in the well, like a recurring
dream. And as if everything
were foretold,

there are melon shapes, auspicious
rows of windows, in the walled
garden in Suzhou.